

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office
6010 Hidden Valley Road
Carlsbad, California 92011
Phone: 760/431-9440
Fax: 760/431-9624

News Release



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Contact: Jane Hendron, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office – 760/431-9440 ext. 205

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SERVICE INITIATES REVIEW OF ISLAND NIGHT LIZARD TO DETERMINE IF REMOVAL FROM ESA PROTECTION IS WARRANTED

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced today that one of two petitions seeking the removal of Endangered Species Act protections for the federally threatened Island night lizard presented substantial information. A review of the species' conservation status is being initiated to determine if proposed delisting is warranted.

The Island night lizard is found only on three of the Channel Islands – San Clemente, San Nicolas, and Santa Barbara – off the coast of California. In 1997, the Island night lizard was federally listed as a threatened species because of habitat loss resulting from the introduction of non-native goats, feral pigs, and rabbits, sheep, and plants to the islands it inhabits.

A petition, submitted to the Service in 1997 by the National Wilderness Institute, requested that the Island night lizard species on all three islands be removed from ESA protection based on data error. After reviewing the petition, the Service determined it did not provide substantial information to indicate the requested action was warranted.

In 2004, the U.S. Navy submitted a petition to delist the Island night lizard. This second petition contends that the Island night lizard is comprised of three distinct population segments – San Clemente, San Nicolas, and Santa Barbara islands – and that each population is discrete and significant to the species as a whole. The Navy's petition requests delisting of the Island night lizard on San Clemente and San Nicolas islands because these populations are stable and viable. The petitioners did not request delisting of the species on Santa Barbara Island.

Based on the Service's initial substantial finding for the Navy's petition, a more detailed 12-month review is required under the ESA to determine if the requested action is warranted. A 5-year review, also required by the ESA, will be included as part of the species' status assessment.

A thorough review of the Island night lizard's status will be conducted over the next 9 months, including an analysis to determine if each of the three populations are distinct population segments. To assist us in this analysis, we are soliciting information about the Island night lizard and the status of threats to the species on San Nicolas, San Clemente and Santa Barbara islands."

The ESA requires the Service to review the status of listed species at least once every five years. While the Service has continued to use the best available information in accordance with its ESA responsibilities for the Island night lizard, the information has not been fully evaluated under five-year review requirement.

Conducting a 5-year review concurrent with the 12-month review will provide an opportunity to assess whether: (1) the species' population is increasing, declining or stable; (2) existing threats are increasing, stable, reduced or eliminated; (3) there are any new threats; and whether the lizards on each of the three islands meet the definition of distinct population segments.

The Service's review could result in no change to the species' threatened status, proposed delisting of the species as a whole, proposed listing of the species as a whole as endangered, or proposed consideration of the three populations as distinct population segments with a proposal to delist or revise to endangered status one or more of the population segments. Any proposed change in status of the Island night lizard would be subject to extensive public review and comment.

Any new scientific or commercial information concerning the status of the Island night lizard should be submitted in writing to the Field Supervisor, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 6010 Hidden Valley Road, Carlsbad, California 92011. Information may also be sent electronically to **FW8cfwocomments@fws.gov**. Please submit comments and information by close of business on October 23, 3006.

More information about the Island night lizard, including a copy of today's Federal Register notice, is available online at **<http://www.fws.gov/carlsbad>**.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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